



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Leviticus 16:1-34

“Yom Kippur and Jesus Christ”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our theme in these studies that we have been undertaking is the Old Testament anticipation of the Messiah. And our subject for today is Yom Kippur and Jesus Christ. I'm going to begin our study today by reading a few verses from Leviticus chapter 16. And so if you have your Bibles, I encourage you to turn to Leviticus chapter 16 and will you listen as I read verse 3 through verse 10 and then verse 15 through verse 22, verses that have to do with the Mosaic instructions concerning Israel's great Day of Atonement. In the third verse of Leviticus chapter 16 we read,

“3Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen britches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on. And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house. And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon

the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness. (And now at verse 15,) Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness. And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel. And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.”

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement it is called in chapter 23 and verse 27. In the Jewish Talmud it is called, “The Day.” It's also in the Scripture spoken of as the Day of

Expiations. It was Israel's greatest feast day, occurring once a year and looking forward to her future national Day of Atonement. There were seven feasts in the festal calendar of Israel. There was the Passover, one that we looked at just recently which occurred on the fourteenth Nissan. There was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of First fruits, the Feast of Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, the Feast of the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of Tishrei and finally, the Feast of Tabernacles.

Yom Kippur occurred historically at Calvary when the Lord Jesus Christ offered the one atoning sacrifice that takes away sin. But the completion of the ritual awaits the Second Advent when the Lord Jesus comes from heaven again apart from sin for salvation. That's the day of which the Prophet Zechariah writes when he says, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." Let's review the surface for a few moments. Seven days before the observance of the Day of Atonement the priest moved his place of habitation to the place where the ceremony would be celebrated. During the week he studied the word of God with regard to the ceremonies and he practiced the things that he was going to do. When the great day came there were three kinds of offerings that were made on that day long celebration. There were offerings in the morning and in the evening, the daily sacrifices. There were also festive offerings that were designed to celebrate the fact that here is the great Day of Atonement for the nation.

But the most important offerings were the expiatory offerings. That is the offerings that were designed to take away sin. Fifteen animals approximately were offered on that day. The priest in order to carry out the ceremony had to change his clothes constantly during the day. And furthermore, he had to bathe a number of times as well. The ritual set out for the day involved all of these things. The change of clothes was very significant, because he first carried out a few of the offerings using his regular clothes of glory and beauty. Those garments of glory and beauty were the ordinary garments that he wore to carry out his priestly duties.

So the first thing that he did when he arrived in the morning was to change from his layman's clothes if we may put it that way to the golden vestments for the ordinary sacrifices. But then when the time came to celebrate the Day of Atonement sacrifices, the sacrifice of the bullock for his own sin and then the sacrifice of the goat and the sending of the goat off into the wilderness, it was necessary then for him to put off the garments of glory and beauty and put on the lined garments that were characteristic of that day, garments that suggested the holiness of the one who was carrying our ultimately the ceremony.

The expiatory sacrifices involved three entrances into the holiest of all in the tabernacle. Now first of all, the priest had to enter with a censer and incense. And there the incense burning in the holiest of all evidently was designed to create the sense of acceptance with the Lord God, the sweet smell of the incense suggesting ultimately the sweet incense of the sacrifice that would truly take away sin. Then the priest made an entrance into the holiest with the blood of a bullock which was slain for his own sin. The blood of the bullock was taken and sprinkled upon the Ark of the Covenant and before the Ark of the Covenant seven times. The priest himself must ceremonially be cleansed from the guilt of his sin in order to carry out this ceremony. And then finally, the priest came into the holiest of all with the blood of the first of the two goats that were the highlight of the offerings of the great Day of Atonement. The High priest took the blood of the goat and did with the blood of the goat as he did with the bullock that was offered for his own sin.

Let's turn now to consider the offerings of the goats because it's clear from the way in which Moses gives the instructions that the two goats are the significant offerings of this day. They were offerings that were made for the cleansing of the sanctuary and for the cleansing of the people as a whole. And of course as one reads the Mosaic account, it becomes evident that this is the account by which the covenant that God made with Israel was renewed for one more year. Their sins were confessed, they were paid

for ritually and ceremonially by the offering of the goat and the other goat sent off into the wilderness and the result was that for one more year Israel stood before the Lord God accepted. The first goat was taken and slain and the blood was taken by the high priest into the holiest of all and there sprinkled on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. The blood of the first goat was designed to suggest expiation for sin, the animal dying because sin brings death. The wages of sin is death, and so when the animal dies, the suggestion that God gave through the ceremony of the Day of Atonement that Israel deserved death.

Furthermore, not only does the death of the goat and the sprinkling of the blood suggest expiation or payment for sin, but of course it also suggests the propitiation of the Lord God and his claims against man. Since God has a completely holy nature, and has also expressed his holiness in his law and since man has offended God's law and offended God's holy nature and stands under divine and eternal judgment, it is necessary for an atonement to be made. And so the blood of the first goat in death suggests the propitiation of a holy God, the satisfaction of his claims against man by virtue of his holy nature and his law.

The second goat was handled quite differently. You'll remember from the reading of the text here that Aaron the great high priest in the first observance of it was to take the second goat and to cast lots. After he had cast lots over the two goats, one of the goats being for Yahweh or for Jehovah that was the goat that was slain, one of the goats that had the lot for it of *hazazel* or an expression that's very difficult to translate completely accurately, for dismissal, or for departure, or holy to put aside. That was the goat that was to be sent off into the wilderness. So after the lots were cast and one of the goats had been offered in expiation of sin typically and propitiation of the claims of God's holy nature, then the second goat was brought forward by Aaron. And Aaron then made a confession as high priest standing as the representative of the children of Israel laying

his hands upon the goat and offering a confession for their sin. This is what he said according to the ritual,

“Ah, Jehovah, they have committed iniquity, they have transgressed, they have sinned, Thy people, the house of Israel. Oh then Jehovah, cover over or atone for, I entreat Thee upon their iniquities their transgressions and their sins which they have wickedly committed, transgressed and sinned before Thee, Thy people, the house of Israel. As it is written in the Law of Moses Thy servant saying for on that day shall it be covered over for you to make you clean from all your sins before Jehovah ye shall be cleansed.”

Then after Aaron had made his confession and identification through the laying on of hands of the children of Israel and their sins with the live goat, the live goat, the second goat was sent off into the wilderness by the hand of a fit man. So Scripture says. It is traditional that the goat was taken over to the Mount of Olives and then beyond that and ultimately taken off into the wilderness.

Now let's for a few moments think about what all of this means in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. So, first of all then the day, this great Day of Atonement and three great truths. The great truth of expiation in blood is obviously something that stands out in this account. Listen to Moses writing in the very next chapter the 17th of Leviticus and the 11th verse. He writes, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls. For it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” Harvey, who discovered the circulation of the blood, said with reference to it, “It's the fountain of life, the first to live, the last to die and the primary seat of the animal soul. To shed blood is to die.” And so when the goat is slain and the blood sprinkled upon the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant, the truth that is set forth by the ceremony in Moses' writings is the truth of the necessity of the

shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission” the Scriptures say.

So first of all then, in the slaying of the first goat, the great truth of expiation in blood is set forth. Now I don't have to say of course that with reference to the Lord Jesus Christ the great truth expressed here is fulfilled when he the Lamb of God, the goat that was sacrificed for sin in reality shed his blood for our sins. That is the fulfillment of this particular part of the ceremony.

The second truth is the truth of propitiation. It is clear from this that the claims of God's holiness and righteousness demand death. When the Lord Jesus died upon Calvary's cross, he said, “My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” That was the time when the Lord Jesus was suffering the pangs of eternal death, bearing the penalty of our sin, satisfying God's claims of holiness and righteousness against sinners. The truth of propitiation, that's what Paul writes about in Romans 3 when he talks about God having set forth Jesus Christ as a propitiation through faith in his blood.

The third truth that is set forth here is extremely important also. It's the truth of substitution. Now, when the Scripture says here that the high priest is to lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over the goat all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions, and then send the goat off into the wilderness, well it doesn't take a whole lot of spiritual insight to see that what Aaron is doing and what the high priest did year after year was to identify with the goat and identify on behalf of the children of Israel, confessing their sins over the goat. The sins become the goat's sins typically and the sins are carried off with the goat into the wilderness and so there is remission of sins in the ceremony.

The reality takes place of course only when Jesus Christ comes and offers that atoning sacrifice. But you can see from this the truth of substitution. Instead of the people dying, the goat dies and the other goat, in order to express the two fold aspect of the death, that is expiation in blood and remission of sins is sent off into the wilderness.

When God looks down as a result of the ceremony, he does not see the sin any longer for it is paid for in the death and in the sending of the animal away into the land that is not inhabited. He sees the expiation, and so in the case of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, when by God's grace he's been brought to faith in him and united to him by virtue of the sovereign grace of God. When God looks upon the sinner, he no longer sees the sinner in his sin but he sees the sinner in Christ, for Christ's work has become a work for him. He has suffered and he has died in his substitute, and he now stands free of guilt and condemnation for sin. What a magnificent transaction that is, and how marvelous it to realize that Christ is my representative and has stood for me in suffering the guilt and penalty of my sin.

You'll remember in our study of the Passover that Moses giving the words of God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." And the same is true still today, "When I see the blood of Jesus Christ applied to your soul by the Holy Spirit, when I see that you're trusting in his saving sacrifice, then I hover over you and keep from you the death of the destroying angel." So it is when I see the blood, not when I see your morality. When I see the blood, not when I see your integrity, when I see the blood, not when I see your education, when I see the blood, not when I see your civilization or culture or character building, but when I see the blood I will hover over and protect you from death. It's the blood that redeems from sin.

Now I'd like to point out a few things as we draw near the close of the way in which this particular event is an event in which we can see a comparison and a contrast between the activity of the high priest and the activity of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, the day and Jesus Christ compared with Aaron. Both the Lord Jesus and Aaron acted under divine direction. Aaron was given his instructions over and over again in verse 2 through verse 9, the word shall is used to express the divine command that Aaron is to carry out. Both divested garments of glory and beauty. Aaron took off his garments of glory and beauty in order to do his work. The Lord Jesus Christ who was in the form of God came

in the likeness of men and performed his work. Both did their work alone. Aaron had no helper; he alone was able to enter into the holiest of all. The Lord Jesus was completely alone when he carried out the atoning work. "My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" In the loneliness of the death as an expiation and propitiation for sin, Jesus Christ died.

Then there are ways of course in which they are to be contrasted. Aaron offered for himself an animal sacrifice. Jesus Christ did not have to offer a sacrifice for himself, for he was the holy and sinless Son of God. As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it in chapter 7 of his marvelous book, he says,

"For such a high priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens, who needeth not daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins and then for the people's, for this he did once when he offered up himself."

Aaron's offering availed for one year; the Lord Jesus Christ in his offering accomplished an eternal redemption for us. Listen to the 12th verse of Hebrews chapter 9, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Aaron offered bulls and goats which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says could never take away sins. He offered himself and in offering himself, he offered himself as the great atoning God man. Aaron stood daily; year after year he had to do his work. He never finished his work. No high priest in the Old Testament finished the work, but the Lord Jesus Christ, so Scripture says, "As by one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified." And further, the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says, "But this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever sat down on the right hand of God."

Here is a high priest who has finally sat down. He has accomplished a finished work as we often sing, "Lifted up was he to die, it is finished was his cry, now in heaven exalted high, hallelujah what a savior." So at every observance of the Day of Atonement, there is a remembrance of the insufficiency of animal sacrifices and a pointer to one effective sacrifice that is to come. It was the day in which as Moses said, "No work was to be done." It was a day of rest, for it anticipated that which Jesus Christ would do. He has offered the one sacrifice. Salvation is now the free gift of those who turn to him confess their sins, acknowledge that Christ has died for sinners, flee to him and lean upon the blood that redeems for salvation. Come to Christ, believe in him, trust in him.

Well next week we're going to continue our series of studies, and we're going to turn to Isaiah chapter 52 and chapter ...

[AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY]